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Fiftieth Session

25th plenary meeting
Monday, 9 October 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti, Her Excellency Mrs. Claudette Werleigh.

Mrs. Werleigh (Haiti) *(interpretation from French)*: With 15 October 1995 only a few days away — the first anniversary of the restoration of the democratic process in Haiti — I am pleased on behalf of the Government and people of Haiti to extend our greetings to the international community gathered here and our wishes for a long life to the United Nations, which is playing an ever more decisive role in the lives of our peoples.

I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal on his election to the presidency of this fiftieth session of the General Assembly and extend my best wishes for his success in the exercise of his important duties.

I should like also to pay a well-deserved tribute to His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, for the wisdom and ability he showed in conducting the work of the forty-ninth session.

Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali on his effective management as Secretary-General of our Organization. His thorough knowledge of the issues and his proposals contained in the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development have enabled him to make a significant contribution to the thinking on reforming the Organization with a view to making it more capable of facing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

This session of the General Assembly coincides with our commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. More than any other, this session is destined to affect the history of our Organization because of the reflection this anniversary will certainly inspire with regard to its future.

Fifty years have elapsed since 51 States, including my own, the Republic of Haiti, recognizing the absolute need to take collective action to work for peace, development and social progress, decided to found the United Nations. From its inception, the United Nations has been a focus of the aspirations and hopes of peoples world wide for a more peaceful future and a more promising tomorrow.

Throughout the half century of its existence the Organization has exerted great efforts to achieve the goals set forth in the Charter. It has addressed a broad range of complex international problems and has, in many cases, been able to find a satisfactory solution to them.

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goals set forth in the Charter. It has addressed a broad range of complex international problems and has, in many cases, been able to find a satisfactory solution to them.

Thus, the United Nations has distinguished itself in the decisive role it has played in the decolonization process, in the strengthening of international security and in the restoration of peace in many parts of the world. It has also contributed to the development of international law. Through a series of global conferences, it has progressed towards an international consensus on such world problems as the environment, population, human rights, the status of women, the rights of the child, sustainable development and many other fundamental questions.

Quite recently, United Nations activities in support of peace have taken on added scope with the increase in peace-keeping operations, some of which have met with outstanding success — operations in Cambodia, in El Salvador or in my own country, Haiti, where the joint action of the United Nations and the Organization of American States brought about a return of constitutional order and thereby provided eloquent testimony to this success.

In that connection allow me on behalf of the people and Government of Haiti to express to the international community our gratitude for its support and its contribution to the restoration of the democratic process in Haiti. Thanks to you, Haiti now has a valid peace; political stability is on the verge of becoming a reality; and the security of Haitian society is a virtual fact.

You helped us to emerge from a period of turbulence and to create in our country conditions favourable to peace and development, replacing the repression under which we had lived for the three years of *coup d'état*. Once again, I wish to express the deep gratitude of the Haitian people to the great family of the United Nations and to each of the nations that, in one way or another, provided support for the return of constitutional order.

In this connection I should like to share with the Assembly the work our Government has accomplished since its restoration.

One year after the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti, significant progress has been achieved in all spheres of national activity. The Government has made it a point of honour to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that the rights of all Haitians are scrupulously respected, freedom of expression and association is guaranteed, our institutions have resumed their normal functioning, the scheduled legislative and municipal elections have been carried out, and insecurity in both towns and countryside has noticeably diminished.

In achieving that result the Government had to adopt measures that were vigorous but welcomed by the vast majority of the population. Among others, I would cite the dismantling of the corps of section heads and their auxiliaries, the demobilization of the armed forces pending approval by Parliament of their dissolution, the establishment of a new national police force in keeping with the wishes expressed in the 1987 Constitution, the creation of the National Magistrature School and the National Penitentiary Administration. All of those measures enjoyed the wholehearted assistance of the United Nations Mission in Haiti, which has been an invaluable partner in the restoration of democratic processes in Haiti.

To strengthen the population's confidence in the process of national reconciliation the Government has set up a National Commission for Truth and Justice to shed light on the atrocities committed during the three years of *coup d'état*, and that Commission has made great progress in its work.

In addition, the Government has understood the need to go further in making reparations and combating the acceptance of impunity. In a Decree of 29 September 1995, the Government decided to allocate 20 per cent of the budget of the Ministry of Justice to victims of the *coup d'état* and to provide them with legal aid in bringing cases and prosecuting criminals. Such measures demonstrate a determination to put an end to impunity and to render justice to those to whom justice is due.

Thus, we are firmly and irreversibly committed to democracy. There are still some problems to be solved, but no one can question the enormous progress accomplished since 15 October 1994. The struggle for the establishment of a democratic State in Haiti continues with ever-greater determination. However, there can be no viable democracy without sustained economic development. In Haiti, the link between democracy and development is fundamental, affecting as it does the very survival of our nation.

In this connection the Haitian Government has given pride of place to two major approaches that define the national development policy, namely, regeneration of the

space some 8 million inhabitants will share before the end of the century, and universal education.

Natural resources — restored, revived and protected from continuous and uncoordinated overexploitation — must be managed by citizens, families and communities, who shall learn to acquire know-how, to share knowledge, to spread information, and to tap both the vast, exciting stockpile of human knowledge and their own rich national culture. Through formal and non-formal education and by using all training and information technologies, we must meet the needs of our population, from elementary education to command of the high technology appropriate to our development.

It is easy to see that, because of their importance, those two fundamental decisions will involve redefining all sectoral and non-sectoral policies and programmes. It is along these lines that we shall define policies of direct State management, fiscal, monetary, budgetary, public-investment, public-administration, public-enterprise management, credit and other policies, as well as policies that demand a degree of partnership with various sectors of the nation. When the conditions are met we will be able to engage in a process of restoring social balance through an improved sharing of national wealth. From there we shall move gradually to narrow the gap between the individual incomes of different groups. If the State uses the means and the tools at its disposal, especially fiscal and credit measures, it should be possible to hasten this movement.

With the support of the international community our nation is working with high hopes to build a State based on law and to restore the fabric of our national economy.

The example of Haiti, which I have just described, along with other successes achieved by the United Nations over the past 50 years, must not hide the reality of a world far from fully achieving the objectives of peace and social progress for all that were the dream of our forerunners. Despite the end of the cold war, which has lessened the probability of nuclear conflict, the Earth continues to be an arena of murderous conflicts that cause unspeakable suffering and vast humanitarian tragedies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Burundi, Georgia and Liberia to name but a few, wars born for the most part of ethnic, religious or tribal antagonisms seem to resist any attempt at solution by the international community. It is true that there has been significant progress with respect to certain crises, such as those of the Middle East and Angola, and my Government joyfully welcomes this. But the persistence of such conflicts dampens our hopes for the establishment of a lasting peace.

In that context, I want to recall the threat that mankind still faces from stockpiles of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. My delegation hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will keep the promises they made at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with respect to ridding the planet of nuclear weapons. The conclusion of a nuclear-test-ban treaty, next year we hope, would be an important step towards that goal.

One of the ideas developed by the Secretary-General in his "Agenda for Peace" is that peace cannot be viable without development. It is acknowledged that a basic cause of instability and conflict throughout the world is increasingly flagrant social and economic disparities and the destitution afflicting a large part of mankind.

In many speeches, the Secretary-General has said that the globalization of problems requires global solutions, whether in the sphere of the environment, migrations, development or international security. It is also time to adopt a comprehensive approach to the collateral effects of inevitable structural adjustment. A timid step in that direction was taken at the Halifax summit of the seven most highly industrialized countries, but what is needed most is greater participation by the countries of the South in the international economic system with a view to defusing the fearsome "social bomb" described at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

Let us remember how vulnerable our countries — especially small island States — are to natural disasters. This year, the Caribbean region has been the victim of an unprecedented number of hurricanes and tropical storms, which have caused significant damage to the infrastructure of a number of countries, which have seen years of effort shattered in a few hours or less. We extend our sympathy to our brother countries, and appeal to the international community to mobilize all the resources needed for their rehabilitation. Clearly, small island States are not equipped to deal with such situations. Perhaps we should consider a multilateral instrument that could limit their effects on the lives and property of affected populations. In that connection, we welcome the "White Berets" initiative inspired by Argentina, of which Haiti was the first beneficiary.

In a world where the burden of globalization in all of its forms is increasingly being felt, the need for a new global contract is becoming more and more imperative, as a means to guarantee international peace and security. At the present time, many countries, including my own, are not able to satisfy the most elementary needs of the majority of their population. With the increasing globalization of markets, and the political, economic, financial and cultural environment of the world, some countries are achieving a degree of success, while other countries continue to slip towards deterioration. The result is that millions of men, women and children are living in subhuman poverty, without access to health care or to adequate nutrition.

This is a timely occasion for our Organization to play its role as an instrument of solidarity and international cooperation, in keeping with the mandate that was conferred on it 50 years ago. The implementation without delay of the Copenhagen decisions would be desirable. It should be of concern that, otherwise, these situations would spill over national borders and become a source of destabilization on a world-wide scale. In that regard, let us recall that sustainable development is the process that guarantees economic, social, political and cultural progress for the present population, and survival with happiness, dignity, peace, democracy and justice for future generations. To the Bretton Woods institutions, we would say that structural adjustment programmes are useful only to the extent that they lead to actual development programmes based on growth, full employment and equity, designed and carried out primarily for the benefit of the most disadvantaged classes of society.

This awareness, which implies the will to put forward a new global contract, also prompts us, on behalf of the Haitian Government, to call upon the relevant forums, not only to define and articulate once and for all the areas of common interest in the various activities of the Organization, but also to seek out the ways and means to release the financial resources necessary to make the actions of our Organization more relevant.

In the context of increased interdependence, which is characteristic of national policies — especially those of third world countries — the instruments used by international institutions and bilateral agreements determine any experience of a certain scope. For that reason, it is not just support that we are requesting from our partners: we are asking them to share with us the experience of addressing these challenges. Let them have a stake and involvement — which is possible and even probable — in the redefinition of their own instruments, which should change if those instruments are to be equal to the challenges which, for decades, have faced the world's efforts to improve the world order.

We can understand that changes in institutions of a certain size may give rise to much reluctance. And we ask: What are the risks to the international community if it engages in an experiment sufficiently limited not to frighten us, yet sufficiently important to test the desirability of extending it to more determining situations and bringing about a significant institutional change?

Our Organization is at a decisive crossroads in its history. As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, we are faced increasingly with the problem of the financing of the Organization's budget for the operation of the system. From the experts' reports, we have already learned that the core resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have shrunk by 15 per cent, and we have noted, with some fear, that contributions to various United Nations trust funds have been undergoing some decline for at least four years. In the long term, this process of regression in the area of financial contributions will constitute a definite threat to the various operations conducted by the United Nations system, whether it be in the field of peace-keeping or in the area of development activities properly speaking.

These considerations prompt us to ask the question that concerns all of us on this fiftieth anniversary, the question of the reform of the United Nations system. At the dawn of a twenty-first century that is so filled with promise — but also so disturbing in certain respects — our Organization will increasingly be called upon to face certain major challenges in the fields of ecology, population, economics, information and the fight against organized crime. Faced with those daunting challenges, some of which are as yet unknown or unimagined, it is important to restructure and to strengthen the basic framework of this universal Organization.

The strengthening of the United Nations structure should, we believe, be built around a legal, administrative and institutional reform. In that respect, my Government would ardently wish to see a reform of the Security Council, with respect both to its mode of operation, which should be more democratic, and to its membership, which should better reflect the diversity that characterizes the great family of the United Nations.

In this regard, we invite all States to look into the most effective ways and means to cooperate with non-governmental organizations. We must acknowledge the fact that, increasingly, these organizations are serving as forums for reflection and initiatives in civil society and are becoming essential partners in the quest for a new world of more human and integrated development.

One area of great concern to the Government of Haiti is the precarious nature of the present situation of many refugees, especially women and unaccompanied children, who deserve special attention. Also, I take this opportunity to state our increasingly resolute opposition to any forced repatriation of refugees in violation of international legal instruments that govern this question, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. Discriminatory policies, racism and xenophobia will only inflame an already tragic situation which has long troubled our conscience. It is time for barbarism to give way to civilization and for respect for human rights to be enjoyed by all, men and women, without distinction.

The Government of the Republic of Haiti supports the plan to create an international criminal court to give effect to the principle of individual criminal responsibility in cases of serious and unacceptable violations of human rights.

My Government is deeply alarmed at the scale of the illicit production of, trafficking in and abuse of narcotics around the world. In order to protect ourselves against this scourge, it calls on producer and consumer States, transit countries and those laundering drug money to give their full support to the fight against this evil.

Since the end of the cold war, a war that actually was only cold on the territories of the great Powers, the limited conflicts that seemed to go along with the inherent situation there have multiplied constantly. We must recognize that only the pretexts have changed. The real reasons for those conflicts, we repeat, are the maintenance of an excessively profitable trade in conventional weapons.

Today, the standing of a nation is not measured, and should no longer be measured, by its economic power or its military arsenal. Today, a great nation must apply itself to solving the problems of its people and those of mankind as a whole.

In 1945, 51 States created the United Nations, whose intrinsic purpose was to maintain international peace and security and to promote the economic development of all its Members. Fifty years later, as we take stock, the changes that have taken place in the international arena only bear out the validity of these ideals of the founding fathers.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is an occasion for us to recognize the capacities of this Organization and the need to reform it in order to turn it into an increasingly effective instrument that can face the challenges of the twenty-first century to build a better world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly on this momentous occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Aware of the strenuous task that this Assembly has to perform, I remain confident of his competence to guide our work to satisfactory conclusions.

It is also my privilege and honour to pay a tribute to the President of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire for the skilful manner in which he discharged the onerous responsibilities of the presidency of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to convey my country's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for displaying exceptional capability and a capacity to meet the daunting challenges and obstacles to his noble mission, and for his ever-readiness to work selflessly not only to retain the credibility and the validity of the United Nations but also to make this Organization stand tall in this rapidly changing world. My delegation sincerely wishes him every success in his unenviable task.

The United Nations is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, and many of us are advocating the need for reforming and restructuring this Organization. There is no doubt in our minds that the world is passing through an era of dramatic change affecting the map of international political relations and changing the balance of economic and trade relations, a reason which would naturally justify this call. But we should not ignore the fact that this Organization has succeeded in preventing a third world war — and the

greatest fear 50 years ago was that such a war would occur.

Furthermore, this Organization has effectively freed the world from the evils of colonialism and racial discrimination. It has also helped in establishing a regime of international cooperation based on the principles of equality and respect for the rule of law. If not for the noble role that the United Nations has played in many areas of human activity, we would not have harvested the progress we enjoy today in the fields of disarmament, containment of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promotion of human rights, and many important issues such as those related to environment and the welfare of refugees, children, youth and women.

Of course there have been failures and set-backs. Many a time we have come across situations which have made us suspect the credibility of the Organization and the effectiveness of its decisions.

But the fact remains that the United Nations has served and is continuing to serve humanity — individuals, peoples and the world community as a whole — with profound dignity and with a sense of purpose, guided by the noble principles of the Charter. And if we are talking about reforming or restructuring this Organization then our concentration should first be focused on the realities of today in order to transpose our collective efforts to strengthen international cooperation for the achievement of our common objectives in full accord with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Moreover, the reforming and restructuring not only should be focused on the concept of international peace and security, but also should be extended to include the entire spectrum of the economic and social development of the human race. In other words, the effect of reform should reach all areas of United Nations activities, including those involving the maintenance of international peace and security, the achievement of equitable economic development, the revitalization of the international economic order, the protection of the global environment, the combating of terrorism and drug trafficking, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of democratic values and legal order within and among nations.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my compliments to the specialized agencies of the United Nations for their efforts to achieve economic growth and sustainable development. The Rio Conference on Environment, the Population Conference in Cairo, the Copenhagen Social Summit, and the recently concluded World Conference on Women, in Beijing, have taken us a long way in this regard.

However it is regrettable to note that, in spite of the encouraging signs, the overall picture of development is not optimistic. The global Official Development Assistance (ODA) today is at its lowest level in 21 years. As a least developed island State, my Government is of the view that there is an urgently felt need to reverse this situation radically. A first step will be for all industrialized countries to live up to the targets specified by the United Nations. If we work in the spirit of collective responsibility and match our efforts with the concerns of the real people in the real world, I am confident that success will be achieved.

As far as the principal organs of the United Nations are concerned, Maldives believes that the General Assembly should continue to play its central role as the global council which has the competence and capacity for taking collective decisions and reaching consensus on important matters related to international peace and security, development, and international cooperation in general.

Meanwhile, the role and functions of the Security Council should be strengthened and improved upon in a way consistent with the realities of the present time, which obviously are significantly different from the geopolitical conditions which prevailed 50 years ago. However, the Maldives is of the view that if a major restructuring exercise is to be carried out it should be a result-oriented one, which would strengthen the authority of the Council and increase its ability to implement its decisions rather than simply increasing the number of members of the Council on a selective basis. Even if we go along with the emerging consensus that the membership of the Council should be increased, my country strongly feels that careful consideration should be given in the process to ensuring that the Council remains a representative body for all regions and groups of nations, including, of course, the developing countries and small States that share the responsibilities for maintaining peace and security in the world with the more developed and the larger Member States of the United Nations. The main criteria should be, we believe, the capability of the Member States to fulfil their obligations and commitments towards the United Nations and its principles, and their respect for and adherence to international covenants.

Fifty years ago membership of this Organization comprised only a few countries. They had the privilege of having a say in world affairs. They created this body to safeguard not only their own interests but also the interests of future generations of the entire world.

The vast majority of Member States that are represented here today, including small States like my own country, Maldives, had been deprived of their freedom in one form or other. It was the principles on which this Organization was founded that helped shape the events which eventually led to the restoration of the legitimate rights of deprived peoples on all continents across the globe.

Now, ours is a community of nations that share the same values and depend on each other in achieving our common and individual interests. Among the Member States of the United Nations there is a large number of small States which are actively interacting with other Member States, not because they merely need the cooperation of the others for their survival and existence, but because they actually are inseparable parts of this large, interdependent world.

What the United Nations is trying to do is to promote peace and justice, eliminate racial and religious prejudices and set up universal standards for aspects of our lives which affect our dignity as equal human beings. Small States are participating in this endeavour with the same conviction that the larger countries have. Therefore, it is more than reasonable that small States should be given the opportunity to play their role in decision-making and carrying forward the torch of our common mission.

As I first mentioned, the reform of the United Nations must be comprehensive and should include the three main organs, the specialized agencies, and all aspects of the United Nations work and activities; a reform which would change the United Nations truly in to a "mission-oriented and results-oriented" Organization, to use the Secretary-General's description. Therefore, my delegation feels that it is important to maintain effective coordination between the open-ended working groups which are already being established, and that we should, by all means, avoid producing a partial package of improvement.

As the world anticipates seeing a revitalized United Nations, we should pause to review the current world situation.

In this context, it is with great disappointment that we see that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains as critical as ever. We are still witnessing the destruction of life and property, the violation of human rights and the defiance of Security Council resolutions by the Bosnian Serb leadership. The continuing deterioration of the situation has led many of us to doubt the applicability of the arms embargo. Many of us, furthermore, fear the consequences of partitioning Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the ethnic composition of this independent State. We urge the international community to exert its influence on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the settlement now being proposed, which we are confident will result in a comprehensive and viable solution to this tragic episode. Meanwhile, we wish to express our deep appreciation to the countries that are contributing bravely to the efforts of the United Nations Protection Force under extremely difficult conditions.

The situation in the Middle East seems to be improving through the peace process. The United Nations has continuously supported the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. The recent accords, which enable the Palestinian people to exercise a degree of self-rule, are certainly a good basis for the realization of this objective. While appreciating the important role played by the sponsors of the recent initiative, we feel that the United Nations should continue to give support to the people of Palestine and to enhance, by all available means, the fulfilment of their legitimate rights.

The recent events that took place in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros demonstrate once again the vulnerability of small States to terrorism and the activities of mercenaries, which threaten not only the security and stability of small States, but also democratic institutions and the lawful existence of Governments. This time the victim was again a small island State in the Indian Ocean. But we have seen that acts of terrorism similar to this one — which took many innocent lives — are occurring rather frequently in many parts of the world. Recalling General Assembly resolution 49/31, on the Protection and Security of Small States, my Government calls upon the international community to take all necessary steps to prevent mercenaries from carrying out their criminal acts.

Giant steps have been taken towards universal disarmament. During the Conference earlier this year at which the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was discussed Maldives supported the Treaty's indefinite extension,

with the firm conviction that it plays a central role in containing the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Treaties have been concluded on chemical and other weapons of mass destruction. It is our fervent hope that the comprehensive test-ban treaty will be signed before the end of 1996. In the meantime, it is most important at this juncture that all States refrain from testing nuclear devices, and those which aspire to achieving nuclear-weapon capabilities should refrain from developing them. Instead, efforts must be made to dismantle all existing nuclear weapons and free the world from this dreadful menace. Further, the countries of each region should agree to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, thus striving collectively towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Furthermore, my Government believes that the course of universal disarmament will translate into an increase in available resources that can be used for urgently needed humanitarian and social development needs.

As mankind awaits the dawn of the twenty-first century with great expectations for peace and justice and for the emergence of a United Nations that will carry forward the noble mission for which it was created, we, the Government and the people of the Maldives, renew our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and pledge that we will do whatever is possible, in cooperation with other Member States, to uphold these principles and work towards a better future.

My delegation wishes to extend its felicitations to all States Members of this Organization on this occasion of its fiftieth anniversary and to congratulate this world body on its tremendous achievements.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, His Excellency Mr. Momolu Sackor Sirleaf.

Mr. Sirleaf (Liberia): I congratulate Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on his assumption of the presidency of the fiftieth regular session of the United Nations General Assembly. We note his laudable accomplishments in the diplomatic service of his country, and feel assured that through his stewardship of this historic session a new paradigm will emerge to direct intercourse among nations of the world.

I also wish to convey the appreciation of the Liberian delegation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, a distinguished son of Africa, for the skilful manner in which he conducted the work of the forty-ninth session.

We commend our able and renowned Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his unrelenting devotion to charting a new course for the United Nations, in spite of formidable odds. Moreover, we are particularly pleased with the fervent attention that he continues to give to a peaceful resolution of the Liberian civil conflict, as well as to the post-war reconstruction of Liberia.

I stand before this body in celebration of the larger freedom that is personified in the survival and success of the United Nations and my country, Liberia. Both were born out of the visions of individuals who dared to stand on higher ground, while others wallowed in fear, hatred, racism, doubts and dismay. Half a century ago my country was proud to be one of three African nations among the 51 States that assembled in San Francisco, California, to participate in the creation of the United Nations, culminating in the signing of its Charter.

The United Nations was born because "We the peoples" from diverse cultural backgrounds, represented by our Governments,

> "determined ...
>
> to reaffirm [our] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

To demonstrate our commitment to these fundamental rights, the principle of sovereign equality was enshrined in the Charter of the Organization and later buttressed, in 1948, by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

One and a quarter centuries before the birth of the United Nations, we the people, from diverse cultural backgrounds represented by individuals and organizations which believed in the larger freedom as a measure of man's dignity and greatness, gave birth to the Liberian nation in times perhaps more vexing and troubling than the birth period of our United Nations. But we the people, determined to escape the degradation to which we were exposed by the denial of the universality of human rights and the commonality of human nature, fled to freedom in pursuit of the very principles for which this Organization stands.

We ought to celebrate the survival and success of the United Nations and my country, Liberia.

Symbolically, they represent the higher nature of man, which compels him to acknowledge that no human being is inferior or superior to another. Just as a man's life

> "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth". (*The Holy Bible, Luke 12:15*)

the greatness of any people or nation is not measured in the abundance of things which they possess.

The survival and success of the United Nations for half a century have destroyed the myth that it is Utopian to organize sovereign nations on a global level in the pursuit of international peace and security. Liberia's survival as an independent State since 1847 also destroyed the myth that Africans were incapable of self-governance. As one of the three African founding Members of the United Nations, Liberia's independence and involvement in international affairs served as a beacon of hope for peoples of African descent engaged in their legitimate struggle against colonial domination. It lent diplomatic and moral support to the decolonization of Africa and other regions of the world and forcefully voiced its opposition to apartheid in South Africa.

As more nations of Africa became independent, Liberia offered them a hand of friendship, brotherhood and solidarity. In particular, Liberia adopted and pursued a policy of peaceful coexistence with its neighbours and was a principal advocate of a functional approach to African unity. This led to the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other entities fostering economic cooperation between the African peoples.

In this connection, my delegation is immensely pleased to celebrate the practical actualization of the vision of three distinguished sons of Africa — Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea and William V. S. Tubman of Liberia — as we note that an independent Africa is observing and actively participating in the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The fiftieth regular session of the General Assembly is convening against the backdrop of tremendous changes in the international system. The peace euphoria which was inspired by the end of the super-Power confrontation has long dissipated and the world is far from being a peaceful and just place. Simmering inter-State disputes, violent civil conflicts and resurgent nationalism, carried to the extreme, have led to the disintegration of several States and threatened international peace and security. The unfavourable consequences of this situation are the loss of many innocent lives and massive refugee flows, particularly in Africa. Unfortunately, my country, Liberia, has not been spared from this onslaught.

The Liberian peace process must be viewed in the totality of Liberia's history. From the Declaration of Independence in 1847 to the present, the Republic of Liberia has been besieged and buffeted by internal and external forces which hold diametrically opposing views relating to the universality of human rights and the commonality of human nature, as well as to the appropriateness of political and economic utilitarianism, where powerful external forces — Governments, multinational corporations, international organizations and so on — manipulate and exploit human and material resources in Liberia to the detriment of the country. This is a reality that cannot be wished away.

Although these views may be based solely on ignorance, it is this same ignorance which fuels the fire of war and destruction around the world, manifesting itself as racism, "ethnic cleansing", tribalism, religious persecution and so on. Thus, for those who believe that the African is less than human or is incapable of governing himself, the existence for almost a century and a half of a politically stable and peaceful Liberia with strong economic potential is undesirable.

Liberia, which was founded — about half a century before the Berlin Congress of 1884, which carved out Africa and institutionalized colonialism — as "an asylum for free people of colour" fleeing the hot crucibles and bitter pangs of slavery, was threatened with partition and trusteeship by the League of Nations, predecessor to our beloved United Nations, half a century after that colonial Congress. Ironically, the charge was slave trading. Although the Liberian Government was grievously at fault, and while we roundly condemn slavery of any kind, that attempt by the League of Nations to undermine Liberia's sovereignty was a sinister, hypocritical subterfuge whose only purpose was to perpetuate a racist myth rooted in a very destructive ignorance. This was not in the best interests of Liberia or Africa, for no nation, international organization or earthly Power can will Liberia out of existence.

Roughly half a century after this unsuccessful attempt by the League of Nations, Liberia experienced the bloody overthrow of its constitutional Government. The political-legal structure had become too rigid and insensitive to the cries of the overwhelming majority of

the people, who wanted to be included in the social, political and economic structures of the country. The erstwhile experienced leaders failed to provide the required navigational changes. The execution of these political leaders, who had navigated the ship of State in turbulent times, and the first imposition of military rule affected more than 13 decades of political stability. The attendant dislocations in our national fabric culminated in the civil war that brings us here today.

Over the past six years, our country has been at war with itself, trying to right injustices among the people of Liberia while maintaining the sovereignty of the nation, including the right to determine our own destiny. To some on the outside, this war has appeared very senseless — and it may be so in the sense that most wars are senseless. On the other hand, we believe that we will emerge out of this as a stronger and more united people in a nation where we will regard ourselves as human beings first and foremost and where the national identity will take precedence over tribal or ethnic identity.

Thus, our efforts to seek peace when agreements are broken should be lauded instead of ridiculed. This reflects our history as a peace-loving nation. We cannot apologize for desiring peace more than war. The Abuja Agreement will hold and usher in a new dawn for Liberia; but even if it did not hold, we would still pursue peace, ignore those who prefer war to peace and strike another deal for peace and democracy. We are optimistic and will not give up on ourselves. We ask the Assembly not to give up on us.

We have consistently maintained over the course of this war that a military solution was neither desirable nor achievable; we have consistently advocated a balance of forces and a Government of inclusion.

In this connection, we commend ECOWAS for its humanitarian intervention in the Liberian crisis. Although mandated to promote the economic integration of the subregion, its action was a necessary concrete manifestation of unique African solidarity and has afforded Liberians the opportunity to resolve their differences through civil discourse.

The primary objective of the Liberian people has been the attainment of a just, comprehensive and durable peace through a political settlement of the conflict. The basic components of the agreements reached by the parties and subsequent resolutions adopted by the Security Council centred around the following objectives: combatants would be disarmed and rehabilitated; sufficient security guarantees would be established to facilitate the resettlement of displaced persons and the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees; internationally supervised elections would be held in accordance with an agreed timetable; a democratically elected administration would be installed; and the international community would lend the requisite assistance for the economic and social rehabilitation of Liberia.

Through the sustained diplomacy of the Economic Community of West African States, complemented by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, and the willingness of the parties to continue negotiations, a final agreement was reached in Abuja, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 19 August 1995.

In celebration of Abuja, we hereby announce our profoundest gratitude to former President Jimmy Carter and current President William Clinton of the United States of America, ECOWAS Chairman President Jerry John Rawlings and his Special Facilitator, Captain Kojo Tsikata, both of Ghana, President Sani Abacha of Nigeria, President Nicéphore Soglo of Benin, the late President Houphouët-Boigny and current President Konan-Bédié of Côte d'Ivoire, President Blaise Campaoré of Burkina Faso, President Lansana Conté of Guinea, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, President Ali Mwinyi of Tanzania, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, former President Sir Dawda Jawara, and current Head of State Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh of Gambia, former President Moussa Traoré, and current President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali, and former President Joseph Saidu Momoh and current President Valentine Strasser of Sierra Leone.

Special thanks also go to all the Presidents and Foreign Ministers of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine, the former Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Abass Bundu, and current Executive Secretary Mr. Edouard Benjamin, OAU Secretary General Salim A. Salim, and OAU Eminent Person, former President Canaan Banana, members of the United Nations Security Council, Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and his Special Representatives, Trevor Gordon-Somers and Ambassador Anthony Nyakyi, all non-governmental and humanitarian organizations in Liberia, the commanders and troops of the Cease-fire Monitoring Group of ECOWAS (ECOMOG), the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the member States of ECOWAS, the OAU, the European Union, the United Nations and all the friends of Liberia for helping us help

ourselves. We also congratulate the Liberian people for their patience, sacrifice, understanding and maturity as we navigate through turbulent waters to peaceful waters.

Unlike previous agreements, the Abuja Agreement to supplement and amend the Cotonou and Akosombo Agreements, as subsequently clarified by the Accra Agreement, provides for a six-man collective presidency comprising the leaders of the principal warring parties and three civilian representatives. They are: His Excellency Professor Wilton S. Sankawulo, Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Charles Ghankay Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), His Excellency Lt. General Alhaji G. V. Kromah of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), His Excellency Mr. George E. Saigbe Boley of the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), His Excellency Mr. Oscar J. Quiah of the Liberia National Council (LNC), and His Excellency Chief Tamba Tailor, joint nominee of the NPFL and ULIMO, as Vice Chairmen.

The very fact that the present collective presidency is functioning and deliberating with unanimity of purpose is reason to celebrate. Each of the six is uniquely and pre-eminently qualified to lead Liberia, but they have relegated their personal ambitions to work collectively as leaders of reconstruction.

The Agreement also retained two cardinal principles of the ECOWAS peace plan. The first requires the Government of Liberia to enter a Status of Forces Agreement with ECOWAS regarding the status of ECOMOG in Liberia. This is being worked on at present.

The second forbids the Chairman of the Council of State from contesting any position in the ensuing elections. Other members of the Council, the Vice Chairmen of equal status, and officials of the Transitional Government may seek elective office, but are required to resign from the Government prior to the elections.

The first signs of adherence to the Abuja Agreement came when, on August 26 1995, a general cease-fire was re-established. On 1 September 1995, the new Council of State was installed in office. Shortly thereafter, a new cabinet of the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) was named and inducted into office. The National Legislative Assembly, the Supreme Court of Liberia and the Elections Commission are functioning in accordance with law.

As disarmament is crucial to a complete and timely implementation of the Abuja Accord, I am pleased to report that ECOMOG has begun the deployment of its troops in many parts of the country, and has taken over command of most of the checkpoints hitherto controlled by the parties. Also, most of the major highways and roads in the country are gradually and steadily reopening for the unimpeded movement of individuals and goods.

The installation of the Council of State marks a new beginning in the peace process. It points towards a final peaceful resolution of the Liberian crisis and has raised the hopes of Liberians, who believe that the process is now irreversible.

Now we must confront the all-engaging task of fostering national reconciliation, unity and the economic rehabilitation of the country. There are clear signs that Liberians earnestly desire to turn the swords of destruction and death into ploughshares of cultivation and rebuilding. They have placed much faith in the democratic option, which will empower them for full participation in the affairs of their country through civil discourse, as opposed to armed confrontation.

Like all countries which have had to make the transition from conditions of war and utter deprivation to conditions of peace and development, Liberia now stands in urgent need of substantial assistance from the international community. Help is also required for the rehabilitation of children traumatized by the war and for the reintegration of former combatants into civil society, where their energies can be redirected to productive activities.

Beyond these pressing needs the private sector, which is very vital to the long-term economic recovery and development of Liberia, must be revived. Therefore we appeal to our investment partners to return with their expertise and financial resources.

We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to hold a pledging conference for Liberia at the United Nations on 27 October 1995 for the demobilization and reconstruction of Liberia, as well as assistance for ECOWAS in the implementation of its mandate.

As we Liberians forge ahead in a determined effort to restore peace in our country and embark on the reconstruction programme, it is imperative that the

international community should provide the requisite support and encouragement to the new Liberian leadership.

In this connection, we recall that earlier this year the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity adopted resolution 1585 on Liberia which, *inter alia*, called on the international community to "recognize and give full faith and credence to the current Liberian National Transitional Government and its successors".

It is my Government's firm belief that the full implementation of this recommendation by Member States will serve to revive and strengthen the bilateral relations between Liberia and friendly Governments by accelerating the reconstruction efforts of the country.

To my compatriots let me say that ours is a country that went to war with itself. In the process, all Liberians have suffered or experienced some loss. We empathize with their grief, pain, anguish and frustration. We must now assuage our hurt by rising above our differences and coalesce into a strong, unified nation, determined to move forward to a better and prosperous future. No matter how well disposed to help us our friends and sympathizers of the international community may be, the challenge is ours to rebuild Liberia. I can only appeal to and plead with those friends and sympathizers to be messengers of forgiveness and love. We have a unique opportunity to participate in the redemption of our common patrimony — Liberia, a reality greater than our individual selves. Let us seize this historic moment.

Our representation before this body would certainly be incomplete without a reflection of my Government's position on the many difficulties and the prevailing sense of frustration persisting on the international political scene. However, the recent efforts to reach a permanent solution to the seemingly intractable crisis in the Middle East represent a positive step in the right direction. In this connection, we view the recent signing — on 28 September 1995 — of the agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority as a significant milestone. We also salute Israel and Jordan for the Treaty signed on 26 October 1994 regarding mutual reconciliation, and we urge other Arab States in the region to emulate this bold initiative.

On the question of limiting nuclear and conventional armaments, my Government believes that nuclear non-proliferation is only the first step to the ultimate goal of complete prohibition. In this connection, we view the recent indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as an act that strengthens the international non-proliferation regime and enhances the maintenance of world peace and security.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia — especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina — and the crises in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Burundi continue to be a source of much concern to the international community. My Government welcomes the important role played by the international community — particularly the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation. We also call on the parties to the conflict to refrain from further military action and to opt for a negotiated settlement, to the mutual satisfaction of all the parties concerned.

With respect to reform of the Security Council, Liberia calls for either expansion of the membership of the Council or modification of paragraph 3 of Article 27 — Chapter V — of the Charter to conform with paragraph 2 of the same Article, to enable the larger membership of the United Nations to participate in the process of decision-making. We believe that either or both of these steps would make the Council not only more representative, but also more democratic and transparent. The proposed reform is also intended to ensure balance between the requirements of efficiency and expansion, transparency in the Council's methods of work and optimum utilization of the resources of those States that can contribute significantly to peace-keeping operations and development activities.

The rationale for our call lies in logic, democracy, equality and the Charter of the United Nations. When we signed the Charter half a century ago there were three African countries among 51 nations. Today the African membership has increased to approximately 52 nations among a total of 185. The five permanent members of the Security Council are from three of the five continents of our world — Asia, Europe and North America. The continent of Africa ought to have at least one permanent member, to be determined by the African countries themselves.

In his inaugural address at this historic session the President of the Assembly averred that if the United Nations is to maintain its unique character as an international Organization that is truly universal, efforts should be made to ensure that all States which are not yet Members can be admitted in the near future. My

delegation fully supports this position and recalls that when we signed the Charter of the United Nations the five permanent members of the Security Council were the Republic of China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Contrary to the principle of universality, the People's Republic of China was not included. We are happy that 24 years ago the General Assembly restored the lawful right of the People's Republic of China to membership of this Organization, in keeping with the Charter's principle of universality and the reality that that country is the world's most populous nation.

Twenty-four years later, we note that 20 Member States from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, in a letter to the Secretary-General, requested that the exceptional situation of the Republic of China on Taiwan be examined by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. My Government firmly believes that the unification of China should be peacefully pursued and that it is a matter for the Chinese people themselves to determine at some time in the future. However, we note that there were two Germanys in the United Nations until their reunification a little over five years ago and that there are still two Koreas, both of which are now Members of the Organization. We have confidence in the ability of the United Nations to deal properly with this long-standing matter so that the unification of China may be peacefully pursued by the Chinese themselves.

We wholeheartedly welcome the recent progressive trends in the world economic spectrum. However, we also remain mindful of the persistent inhibitive factors that continue to account for the slow and unbalanced growth of the global economy. In spite of the increase in the number of developing countries now participating as key players in the world economy, the magnitude of increasing poverty for more than 1 billion people of the world leaves much to be desired. The gap between developed and developing countries continues to widen, not only reflecting the marginalization of the developing countries but also undermining efforts aimed at securing access to international trade, communications and the flow of vital information.

Meanwhile, there is also a crisis of official development assistance, caused by stagnation and a reduction in assistance sources. It is worth noting that there is a need for increased cooperation if anything is to be achieved in addressing these distracting issues. One approach would be to reconsider the agreement regarding the developed countries contributing 0.7 per cent of gross national product to the assistance programmes for the developing countries. The economic situation in most African countries is critical and precarious. It is true that the global economic situation affects all developing countries, but its impact on sub-Saharan Africa is tremendous.

While we recognize that the development of Africa is primarily our responsibility, concerted efforts by the international community and donor countries will complement the national efforts of African Governments in reversing the negative trend of their economies.

As regards the role of women in development, we believe that the full and equal integration of women into the development process at all levels is a central goal. We fully support the Conferences that were held in Cairo and Accra and in Taiwan earlier this year, and we are also committed to the successful implementation of the decisions reached at the 1995 World Conference on Women, held recently in Beijing, with the theme "Action for Equality, Development and Peace".

Liberia — a Founding Member of the United Nations — although encumbered by a fratricidal war, is proud of its modest contribution since the formation of the Organization, particularly in respect of the decolonization of Africa and its aspirations for economic growth and development. As the country emerges from war, it pledges anew its commitment to the Organization. It is our firm belief that the United Nations offers the best hope for a just and more equitable world. Member States are therefore challenged to pool their resources and work together, not as competitors but as equal partners aligned in a common pursuit.

Liberia is determined to regain its rightful place, by virtue of its long history and involvement in the struggle for peace, cooperation and the prosperity of all peoples, in the comity of nations.

During the past half-century of its existence, the United Nations has endeavoured to maintain international peace and security and remain responsive to the needs of the public that it serves. Today, its responsibilities have increased to cover urgent humanitarian emergencies which require the deployment of tremendous resources. It is hoped that the corresponding support will be forthcoming from Member States.

When the United Nations succeeds, the great majority, who depend on the services it provides, are lifted from misery, suffering and deprivation. That is the basic principle we should bear in mind as the Organization enters its fifty-first year of existence. The United Nations, in spite of its perceived shortcomings, which we must collectively seek to overcome, represents mankind's legitimate aspiration to be truly our brother's keeper. Let us rededicate ourselves to this important objective to ensure our survival and that of succeeding generations.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Lekhal.

Mr. Ould Lekhal (Mauritania) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: On behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania it gives me pleasure to convey to Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We are convinced that his well-known personal skills are the best guarantee for the success of the work of this session which acquires special significance as it coincides with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the sister republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who led the work of the forty-ninth session in an excellent and praiseworthy manner.

I should also like to take this opportunity to reiterate to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, the confidence of my country and our support of his efforts so that the Organization may fully perform its proper role and succeed in defusing hotbeds of tension throughout the world.

We have clearly stated, on previous occasions, that the deteriorating economies of the developing countries and the widening gap between the rich and poor countries are the two principal causes of the proliferation of hotbeds of tension and bloody wars that, more often than not, wipe out every economic achievement, plunge the peoples of developing countries into cruel suffering and deprive them of the right to lead a decent life of security, stability, and development towards a better future.

As we have noted in the past, the fact that structural adjustment programmes neglect the necessary assessment of the social cost of such adjustment and focus on correcting the macroeconomic balance, has had the effect of causing such programmes to fall short of achieving the desired positive results. In this connection, we had voiced concern over the possibility that the deterioration of the economic conditions of developing countries would limit the impact of such international instruments as environmental conventions and programmes that promote the rights of children and women, and human rights in general.

Today we note that despite the convening of numerous international conferences such as the World Summit for Children in New York, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing, there is nothing on the horizon yet that may give cause for hope that radical solutions to the many problems besetting the most vulnerable peoples in the poorest countries throughout the developing world are beginning to emerge.

While these international conferences, in addition to the Agenda for Development of the Secretary-General of the United Nations have drawn the broad outlines of future policies that would deal with such problems, no specific formulae for putting those policies into practice have emerged yet. On the contrary, we note that the deterioration of the terms of trade and the reduction in official development assistance (ODA) have continued and have been the two principal causes that aggravate the stifling economic crises which have so many third world countries in their grip.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania which, since 1984, has been engaged in a determined battle that aims at restructuring the Mauritanian economy despite difficult domestic, regional and international conditions, has made tangible progress towards restoring the macroeconomic balance and reducing its foreign debt, a fact that is attested to by international financial institutions.

In striving for these objectives, my Government, under the wise guidance of His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya, have pursued liberal economic policies that neglect not a single aspect of economic and social development.

These economic policies that we pursue encompass the following broad sectors: road building, the

electrification of cities, combating desertification, development of water networks, combating illiteracy, the empowerment of women and development of the child, education for all, and health coverage for the whole population. In seeking to achieve these objectives, the Government of Mauritania focuses on developing the agricultural, mineral and fisheries sectors which form the backbone of our economy.

In view of the nature of such development plans and social policies the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania have participated in all the negotiations that led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which entered into force on 16 November 1994, and participated also in the negotiations which culminated in the conclusion of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, signed in Paris on 14 October 1994. It is our fervent hope that the international community will make available the resources required for the implementation of this Convention which will benefit principally the African countries that are most affected by drought and desertification.

The United Nations, which will commemorate its fiftieth anniversary, in a few days' time, is now required to adapt to the realities of the age in order for it to be able to face up to the challenges of a world that is being torn apart by regional conflicts and whose progress towards prosperity is obstructed by very complex social and economic crises. Such a situation requires us to undertake the necessary structural reforms and to make available to the Organization the necessary material means and moral support that would enable it to discharge the tasks entrusted to it.

We have indicated here in the past that the spread of democracy and respect for human rights constitute the most important gains made by the international community. We have indicated also that democracy should not be limited to the national framework of any individual State but must extend to the relations between States.

Proceeding from this, we have reiterated, on many occasions, that we support increasing the membership of the Security Council in consonance with the behests of democratic transparency, the principles of equality of States, and in accordance with Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, which stipulates that in carrying out its duties the Security Council acts on behalf of all the Member States. In view of this, it is essential that the Council should reflect the universal nature of the Organization.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We also consider it necessary to restructure the Secretariat in order to revitalize it and enhance its efficiency. The Economic and Social Council must be restructured so that it can discharge the tasks entrusted to it. The activities of the Secretariat and the specialized agencies must be coordinated so that efforts may not be wasted and the modest resources available for resolving development problems could be put to optimum use.

As our overriding concern will always be the search for peace, my country spares no effort in supporting the international endeavour to replace war and tension with peace and stability throughout the world. We have encouraged and continue to encourage the use of preventive diplomacy in order to avoid new human tragedies. This is an approach that has always led to satisfactory results.

In the Middle East, there is stronger hope that the international efforts which have been deployed since the Madrid Conference will put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and restore to that people its legitimate right to establish its own independent State. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on the autonomy of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, on 13 September 1993, the Cairo agreement, on 4 May 1994, the agreement between Jordan and Israel and, finally, the Taba accord, which was signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, on the implementation of the second phase of the Declaration of Principles, gives us hope that peace in the Middle East is now on the horizon. We do hope that there will be progress on the tracks of the peace process initiated with Syria and Lebanon and that solutions to all the unresolved humanitarian issues related to this conflict may be found in order for a just and lasting peace that would be based on the principles of mutual respect to promote fruitful cooperation and brotherly relations between all the peoples of the region.

It is fitting here to congratulate the parties directly concerned and all the countries that, from near or far, have supported the efforts for peace. We also encourage all the parties concerned to keep moving forward so that the opportunities for peace which are available today may not be wasted. If those opportunities are frittered away, the situation is bound to become more complicated.

In that same region of the world, the residue of the Gulf war, unfortunately, are still taking their toll. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, which, from the very beginning, given its commitment to international legality, has totally rejected any infringement of the independence and territorial integrity of fraternal Kuwait, and called for resolving the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees, now wishes to declare its rejection of any infringement of the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. Mauritania believes it is now time to put an end to the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people.

In the same context, the fraternal State of the United Arab Emirates continues to claim its legitimate sovereignty over the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Moussa. Mauritania reiterates its support for the United Arab Emirates in this respect.

In the Maghreb, the United Nations continues to deploy efforts towards organizing a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. We hope that the United Nations, which has enjoyed our country's full support, will overcome the remaining obstacles and succeed in organizing the referendum within the time-frame set by the Security Council so as to achieve a just and definitive settlement of the Saharan question.

As we did last year, and as we have done on every occasion, we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed on the fraternal people of Libya, in the light of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya's stated readiness to cooperate with both the United Nations and the other parties concerned, since that embargo is detrimental to the interests of all the peoples of the Maghreb.

In Africa, we are still concerned over the continuance of armed conflicts in several brotherly African countries. Whereas our Liberian brothers have succeeded, through dialogue, in concluding the Abuja Agreement and setting out plans that we hope will restore peace to that country. The situation in Somalia, regrettably, has not changed, and the afflicted Somali people is still threatened with extermination by fratricide and famine.

We also hope that our Rwandan brethren will succeed in resolving their problems at the negotiating table. We welcome the progress achieved by our Angolan brethren, whose efforts have led to the signing of an agreement for peace and for the settlement of their political problems. We hope the sustained efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity will continue until these brotherly countries can enjoy peace so that their peoples may devote themselves to rebuilding all that has been devastated by civil wars.

We note with satisfaction that in Europe the member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have adopted a new posture *vis-à-vis* the Serbian aggression against the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I should like to voice the hope that in future greater determination will be shown in dealing with this problem increasingly sternly until such time as the Serbs agree to a just and comprehensive solution that would guarantee all the peoples concerned the right to sovereignty on their territory and the right to live in peace within secure, internationally recognized borders.

The many humiliations suffered by the United Nations forces at the hands of the Serbs and the massacres of innocent Muslims perpetrated by the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina make it necessary for the international community, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, to impose respect for international legality and to restore the credibility of the United Nations by putting an end to the bloodshed that has gone on for several years in that part of the world.

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations affords an opportunity for giving deep thought to finding the best means of facing up to the challenges of our times and to equipping our Organization with the military capability and material resources that would enable it to address problems at the international level with a single standard based on the principles of equality and justice. The same should apply to the Organization's activities in the areas of peace-keeping and aid for development, as well as in its endeavours to ensure that the world will enjoy prosperity, peace and brotherhood and to promote freedom, democracy and respect for human rights.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on Mr. Henry Koba, Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Koba (Central African Republic) (*interpretation from French*): Just last June we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the San Francisco Charter, which to this day still governs our Organization. On that occasion, all Member States were able to take stock of the road we have travelled in 50 years of endeavouring to transform our planet Earth into one enamoured of peace, freedom and justice.

Not so long ago from this rostrum, through Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, President of the Central African Republic, my country pondered the scope and significance of the important events that are continually shaking the world and touching the conscience of one and all.

My country, at that time, looked forward to a new era of peace and security such as once existed in the Garden of Eden, and we welcomed the idea of fair and fruitful cooperation, especially for the benefit of the least developed countries such as the Central African Republic. But what do we see today?

It is a tradition for the United Nations to meet in the General Assembly to reflect on the way in which it intends to assume its responsibilities in guiding the fate of mankind, but there can be no doubt that this collective endeavour can only be pursued in the light of the objectives we have set — that is to say, international security and sustainable development. And so, this session, more than any other, is of special importance for my country, the Central African Republic, because our universal Organization will need to ask itself whether it has fully achieved its goals.

I am therefore very pleased to convey to the Assembly the best wishes of His Excellency, the President of the Central African Republic, Ange-Félix Patassé, the Head of State, for complete success. Together with all of the Central African people, he places deep confidence and unshakable faith in the future of our Organization. I feel certain that the great personal abilities of Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral will enable us to look forward to the complete success of our work. To Mr. Amara Essy, the outgoing President, I wish to convey my sincere congratulations for the dynamism, competence and effectiveness with which he so brilliantly conducted the work of the last session of the General Assembly, thereby doing credit to all of Africa. Allow me also to express again my sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the outstanding competence, constant dedication and unmatched efficiency with which he is directing the work of our Organization.

Since the end of the cold war, all nations have rightly looked forward to an international environment that is more conducive to cooperation and dialogue than to confrontation as was the case in the past. The tireless efforts of the international community to achieve this have been most praiseworthy despite the difficulties encountered in some cases in achieving peace and security, which are indispensable in the economic, social and cultural development of nations.

In this regard, we should therefore, once again, express thanks to the international community, which took part in the emergence of a true democracy in the Central African Republic, a democracy whose day-to-day practice is acknowledged beyond its own borders. Strengthened by that achievement, my country is practising a policy of preventive diplomacy and development and has just completed the first phase of this change, notably through the restoration of public confidence and establishing democratic institutions, re-establishing fiscal health and control, health measures, training and education and by the adoption and promulgation, on 14 January 1995, of a new and truly democratic constitution. The Constitution, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority, introduces a policy of decentralization, with its corollary of regionalization aimed at involving the population in the tasks of development and at mobilizing all local resources for the enhancement of the standard of living of the rural masses.

The second phase of the programme pertains to other major challenges such as the regional development, the opening up of the country from its land-locked status both internally and externally; agriculture and livestock-breeding; the development of natural resources; and agricultural and forest management.

All of these ambitious plans can be carried out only if there is a climate of confidence and peace in our subregion — Central Africa. My country has fully understood this and has pursued a policy of good-neighbourliness to bring about peace both within and outside the Central African Republic. Thus, we consistently contribute, through preventive diplomacy, to efforts to prevent international conflicts.

A land-locked country whose present Government is burdened with a heavy and multifaceted legacy, the Central African Republic is constantly searching for logistical means to support the economic development efforts in order to promote an increase in production and strengthen the fight against poverty.

That is why the future programmes of structural adjustment should necessarily include social dimensions because, as has been stated by our Prime Minister, our Head of Government, the Central African Republic cannot create new social outcasts, new disadvantaged

classes resulting from these structural reforms, which are often very restrictive.

At a time when the efforts of the international community are being speeded up in order to relax tensions in the world, it is more specifically in the low-income and poor countries that we are increasingly seeing armed conflicts producing massive destruction.

Witness the case of Somalia where, after the withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), the acute problem of repatriating and resettling some 500,000 refugees and 400,000 displaced persons calls for the efforts of all of the international community.

Witness also the case of Burundi where the situation is of concern to my Government, which constantly encourages that neighbouring Government to secure the peace.

However, my delegation commends the Joint Declaration of Peace signed between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, which, I am sure, will make it possible to reduce the tension and the threat to security in Burundi, where problems of humanitarian assistance to refugees are becoming a source of constant concern to all of the international community.

In Rwanda, the machinery of the Organization of African Unity for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts will become fully operative with a view to bringing to an end the many sufferings of the people of Rwanda.

On the one hand, my delegation encourages a return to normal democratic life in that kindred nation and on the other the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and the international community as a whole are urged to become even more concerned with the question of security and with the questions of refugees and displaced persons.

Along this line of thinking, my delegation highly appreciates the farsightedness of Angola's President, Eduardo dos Santos, and of his brother, Mr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA, who, thanks to the commendable mediation of President El Hadj Omar Bongo of Gabon, agreed definitively to conclude peace through the Franceville agreement.

My delegation is concerned at the situation in Sierra Leone, where war has been raging for four years, with great loss of life and property.

However, we welcome the positive turn of events in Liberia, where all of the armed factions have understood the need to lay down their weapons and to sit down around the table to negotiate a peace — for this war, which has lasted all too long, will have known no victors and no vanquished.

The Central African Republic welcomes the fact that our Organization has been able to affect the course of some events that were major sources of concern to the international community. Despite the many situations of tension that are sometimes difficult to control, we must welcome the fact that in the two years preceding this fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations we have witnessed Africa's complete political liberation, the end of apartheid and the gradual introduction of democracy, notwithstanding isolated setbacks from time to time.

We would cite in particular the Middle East, where significant progress has been achieved in the peace process in the region and where real, praiseworthy efforts are being made daily by the parties concerned, despite occasional difficulties encountered in implementing the commitments that have been entered into.

This gives me an opportunity to congratulate the peoples of Israel and Palestine on their persistent efforts, which were crowned with success by the signature, on 29 September at Washington, of agreements pertaining to the second phase of that peace process.

Congratulations should also be extended in respect of Chechnya, where the Peace Agreement recently concluded between the parties will contribute to consolidating a true and lasting peace in the region.

With regard to the situation in Kashmir, we call upon our friends in India and Pakistan to come to an understanding and work out a negotiated solution to the problem, in the name of justice.

Turning to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central African Government hails the praiseworthy efforts of France and the United States to calm troubled waters. The international community too should exert every effort to restore peace and security to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethnic, nationalistic or religious

tendencies pose a dangerous threat to the tranquillity and stability of that part of Europe.

No one is immune to these ancient sources of conflict, and the Central African Republic sympathizes with the countries and peoples enduring such tragic trials.

In a few days the United Nations will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, without having brought into being the long-sought new world economic order. The countries of the North continue to be powerful while those of the South continue to mark time with an official development assistance that has declined from 0.38 per cent in 1980 to 0.33 per cent in 1993. Some donors are no longer meeting their commitments, so Africa continues to live through a time of poverty, natural disasters, migrations and all kinds of other misfortunes. My delegation therefore believes that trade must be urgently liberalized through a substantial reduction in tariffs and other trade barriers, through the elimination of discriminatory treatment in international trade relations and by stimulating world economic growth and sustainable development in the interests of all countries, the developing countries in particular.

Indeed, the entry into force on 1 January 1995 of the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization could not have been more timely, for were it to be fully implemented it would solve a great many of the problems of the land-locked developing countries, the Central African Republic among them. And, as President Ange-Félix Patassé said here last year,

> "What we need to save the continent is a real Marshall Plan, because at the present time multilateral and bilateral assistance remain insufficient to promote sustained and lasting growth." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 19th meeting, p. 5)*

My delegation is among those that would strongly urge the most powerful Member States to commit themselves to working towards the achievement of the goals set forth in the Charter in order to ensure that the world does not drift ineluctably towards chaos and disaster.

Finally, with regard to the advancement of democracy, the efforts of the United Nations will never be sufficient so long as the Republic of China on Taiwan is not admitted as a Member of this prestigious institution.

As His Excellency Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, President of the Central African Republic, noted in his appeal last year, under the Charter of the United Nations there are no large nations and there are no small nations, for all must contribute to peace and universal progress towards a just, humane and democratic world.

Democracy and respect for fundamental human rights have and will have no meaning so long as the hard-working population of the Republic of China on Taiwan is not represented here in the Assembly. In this connection it would be fitting to take into account the precedents that exist with regard to the parallel representation of States in the United Nations.

We would recall the following words of the President of the General Assembly at the opening meeting of this fiftieth session of the Assembly on 19 September:

> "... the United Nations has ceased to be an intergovernmental organization with a limited membership and has become the only international organization that is universal. Efforts must be made to ensure that all States that are not yet Members should seek to be admitted in the near future. For the same reason, the most serious penalty imposed on a Member State should never be expulsion, but rather suspension, for the United Nations must, as a matter of principle, include all the world's countries." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 1st meeting, p. 7)*

The Government of the Central African Republic also believes that dedication to international peace and security should prohibit our engaging in any form of intimidation or confrontation that can damage *rapprochement* among States or, especially, weaken security. This requires the highly desirable admission of the Republic of China to the United Nations.

With regard to the restructuring of the Organization at the end of its half century of life, the Government of the Central African Republic is firmly convinced that the only remedy to the delays experienced in intervening in or contributing to the resolution of tensions or open conflicts is to be found in a decentralization of the system. That decentralization should begin with the democratic and equitable representation of Member States in the Security Council and at all levels. We regard this as the only approach capable of taking proper account of geopolitical and economic specificities.

In any event, this session should provide an opportunity to draft a new organizational chart for the United Nations and to adapt the Organization's structures and functions in the light of our stocktaking and relevant comments by Member States.

For its part, the Central African Republic reserves the right to speak out in the debates in the Committees and during the ceremonies commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Whatever the case, everything should contribute to make the twenty-first century the century of Africa.

In conclusion, the Central African Republic firmly believes that only respect for and observance of the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations will truly enable us to solve the problems that confront us as this century draws to a close. We hope that this session will mark a new stage on the way to effective cooperation for progress and peace for the international community as a whole.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas, Her Excellency Mrs. Janet G. Bostwick.

Mrs. Bostwick (Bahamas): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I convey warm congratulations to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on his election as President of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that, with his experience and diplomatic skills, he will guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I wish also to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, who presided over the work of the forty-ninth session with great distinction.

The Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has continued in the discharge of his duties to provide outstanding leadership to this Organization. The Bahamas is particularly grateful to the Secretary-General for his untiring and visionary efforts in pursuit of world peace and security, development and international cooperation.

Global changes in recent times have created unprecedented possibilities for both progress and disaster on our planet. Yet we fail to assume the responsibilities that both possibilities demand. We have the machinery for this purpose; we must take it out, overhaul it and make it functional. This requires the review and updating of the institutions and processes of international cooperation. Within the context of the global consensus around the need for such an overhaul, including the adoption of new approaches, our tasks are greatly eased. If we accept the adage that form follows function, we must now determine what it is we are hoping to achieve, and what function we are seeking to serve. The form of the structure for ensuring the effective execution of that function will then naturally emerge.

The framers of the Charter were determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have managed to do this as far as global war is concerned, but what have we saved these generations for? What is their heritage? What is their future? Is it good enough to save them for the seemingly inevitable lot of chronic poverty, ignorance and disease, for the threat of nuclear annihilation or the consequences of global warming? Is it good enough to save these generations for a life where the security and very existence of the planet on which they live is in jeopardy?

Clearly, those responsible for establishing the parameters of action in the past have not produced the result that is not only desirable but necessary to ensure a stable, secure and viable future. The question now is who determines the assignment of responsibility. Is it possible that those countries most directly concerned have abdicated their responsibility, with the result that their fate now resides in the hands of those whose interests are, at best, competing?

It is only logical that those who stand to lose and benefit most must assume the lead in establishing the contours of the agenda for the process which will usher in the kind of order that gives coherence to their ideas and vision, and that provides for the attainment of their objectives. This places before developing countries like the Bahamas untold opportunities and challenges. One of the major challenges will be to ensure that our relationship with our global partners is truly one of interdependence, and not masked dependence where the majority of humanity are only subordinate players, citizens of countries marginalized and on the periphery of global change.

Genuine interdependence coupled with a true sense of interconnectedness would eliminate the desire for unilateral action. In this context, we are disturbed and

disappointed over the decision by two nuclear States to proceed with nuclear tests after the solemn commitments of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The hope of the international community had been for complete moratoriums on testing until the entry into force of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, envisaged for the end of next year.

The Bahamas is especially pleased that United States President Bill Clinton, on 6 August last, unequivocally committed his Government to ending all testing of nuclear weapons, and further committed his Administration to the completion of negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

Despite the easing of global tensions since the end of the cold war, the maintenance of international peace and security remains a major preoccupation for the United Nations. Religious and territorial disputes have presented the international community with new challenges and with the need to provide appropriate solutions.

Of all the regional conflicts in the world today, particular mention should be made of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. In this regard I must express my delegation's dissatisfaction with the continuation of hostilities in that region. It is the hope of my delegation that the efforts now being undertaken by the parties concerned towards achieving a negotiated solution to end that conflict will meet with success.

We also welcome the recent agreement on expansion of Palestinian interim self-rule. This constitutes a major step forward in the Middle East peace process.

It is the hope of the Bahamas delegation that during this fiftieth session of the General Assembly every effort will be made to take decisions that will sustain efforts towards the maintenance of global peace and security.

It is with a sense of responsibility that the Bahamas assumes a strong stance on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Haiti. We participated in United Nations efforts to return President Aristide to Haiti. This is a second chance for Haiti. We note that since the return of President Aristide the gross human rights violations have subsided and that the democratic process has now begun with the first and second rounds of elections.

Elections, however, are only the beginning. Massive assistance, financial and technical, is what is needed to create the proper institutional and infrastructural framework to facilitate rapid development in Haiti.

The Prime Minister of the Bahamas has stated on several occasions,

> "We in the international community have sold the Haitian people a bill of goods. We have told them that democracy will bring peace, stability, and economic and social development. We must now ensure after-sales services."

Time is of the essence. The people of Haiti must not be allowed to lose hope for the betterment of their condition. We must ensure that we receive the necessary returns on our investment to date. To do so requires a strategy for ensuring that the situation that has given rise to the initial crisis is not allowed to re-emerge.

There are now indications that some of the people of Haiti have already begun to lose hope. I was informed only a few hours ago that 216 new refugees were found in the waters of the Bahamas. This brings the number of new refugees who have risked their lives on the sea in the last month to over 1,000. This cannot be allowed to continue. The Government of the Bahamas, together with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) partners, reiterates its commitment to playing its part in the rehabilitation of Haiti.

The changes in the international system have also made States acutely aware that attention must now be paid equally to environmental security. Illustrative of this are the issues of nuclear testing, the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes, and natural-disaster preparedness, which are of considerable concern to us in the Caribbean region.

Natural disasters have wreaked havoc upon countries and people. The Bahamas extends its sympathy and support to our sister Caribbean States and the United States of America, which have just recently been victims of this phenomenon. The Bahamas is encouraged by the support given by the United Nations system, CARICOM, and other countries, including Japan, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, for the rehabilitation of the affected countries.

A new approach requires a new attitude and a new commitment to enforcing those aspects of the present order which, though potentially effective, have been employed selectively at best. Respect for the rule of law,

basic human rights and the dignity of the individual must be rediscovered. There is need for a strong ethical base to ensure integrity and honesty in honouring agreements. This becomes increasingly important in the context of the globalizing effect of trade and communications technology. As commercial barriers are removed, we must ensure that ethnic and cultural barriers are not erected in their place, as these produce intolerance and the concomitant intra-State ethnic, religious and territorial disputes.

Equally important to this new approach is a recognition of the revised roles for former leaders and actors in our affairs; traditionally, matters of national and international concern were dealt with at the intergovernmental level. It is now necessary to recognize that individuals and institutions, both public and private, must have an input. Effective management or governance must be inclusive.

This realization does not, however, remove the responsibility of Governments to conduct their affairs in a manner that is both democratic and transparent, thereby facilitating accountability. Democratization must mean a guarantee of free participation, where the expressed will of the people is fully reflected in the actions of Governments. Such democratization must not be limited to States, but must spread throughout the international system and its several components. The United Nations, as one of the principal elements of this system, must reflect this democracy in its decision-making bodies, such as the Security Council. The Bahamas has followed the deliberations of the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council with great interest and hopes that the momentum of those deliberations will be maintained, with a view to reaching consensus on the issues at an early date.

Once again, the Bahamas wishes to record its support for the entreaties made by the Republic of China on Taiwan to this Organization to examine the merits of establishing an ad hoc committee to analyse comprehensively the current implications and future ramifications of the preclusion of the 21 million people in the Republic of China from contributing to, and availing themselves of, all the benefits derived from membership in the United Nations and its affiliated agencies. The Bahamas also lends its voice to those who encourage dialogue and meaningful confidence-building steps between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

The Government of the Bahamas is committed to good governance and democratic principles, where human rights and dignity are respected, and where strong democratic structures exist, involving every stratum of society. Such a context facilitates the decentralization of decision-making to the communities which will ultimately be affected by them.

My Government's philosophy is based on the following seven tenets: the exercise of honesty and accountability in all public matters; the development and strengthening of the world's economy, so that all people may aspire to suitable and acceptable living standards, and to meaningful improvement of the quality of their lives; the commitment to providing the private sector with incentives, encouragement and scope for revitalizing and expanding the world's economy, so as to generate sustainable employment opportunities for all people; the enhancement of educational and training opportunities and the development of suitable recreational facilities, so that young people will be equipped for challenging careers and can lead purposeful lives; the establishment of compassionate social programmes to assist those in society who are in the greatest need; the creation of a physical and social environment as beautiful and as secure as possible, so that all people can enjoy the full beauty and wonder of the world without fear, hindrance or intimidation; and, finally, the development of mutual trust and harmony among the peoples of the world, irrespective of religious, racial, economic or social differences.

My Government recognizes the vital role of women in all aspects of this process. It seeks to ensure that they are involved in shaping and moulding their destinies by removing all barriers to their access to policy-making levels of society and to their full involvement in the decision-making process.

It is gratifying to note that most of the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action of the recent Fourth World Conference on Women are being adequately addressed in the Bahamas.

In fulfilling its responsibilities for shaping this new order outside the Bahamas, my Government will seek to ensure that its national priorities find room on the international agenda and in the organizations assigned to address these matters. We cannot decry the international community for lack of action if we fail to provide the necessary leadership.

We extend such an attitude to our commitment to ensuring that the United Nations, which constitutes the best mechanism for addressing such an agenda, operates

on a sound financial basis by seeing to it that our contributions are paid in full and on time. We encourage other nations to do likewise. It is a travesty that at a time when this Organization has been assigned such a vital role in the management of international affairs it is on the verge of bankruptcy, with only some 60 countries out of 185 having fully met their financial obligations to date.

Responsibility for our future is in our hands. The founding fathers of this Organization provided a solid foundation. Regrettably, the structure erected thereon has proved inadequate for the needs of the "family". Let us now ensure that in our renovations all concerns are taken into account so that we provide not only shelter but also warmth and security.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Terence Nsanze.

Mr. Terence Nsanze (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The United Nations is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Today, it is up to us to take stock of its progress and its successes, as well as its and shortcomings since its inception, but also, and in particular, to consider and assess the experience it has gained, in order to provide a firmer basis for its future, which, after all, is closely linked with the future of mankind.

The people of Burundi, whom I have the honour to represent in this Assembly, set particular store by this session, which should galvanize all the Member States of our Organization to work for the progress and the survival of the world as a whole.

In Burundi, a number of activities to promote awareness of the purposes and principles of the United Nations have been undertaken. We can assure the Assembly that our country duly acknowledges the eminent role that the United Nations has played and continues to play in helping Burundi return to the road of peace and security.

We are pleased that the presidency of this session of the General Assembly, which should be the springboard for its revitalization, has been entrusted to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who has been blessed with great intellectual and moral qualities and wide political and diplomatic experience. His country and mine enjoy friendly relations in all areas. What has already been said about him here show that the congratulations my delegation extends to him are well deserved and justify the assistance it will be pleased to give him as a contribution to the success of his noble mission.

We would also like to pay a sincere tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire. Throughout his term of office, he applied himself to the tasks resulting from the present developments in the United Nations. In this connection, Foreign Minister Amara Essy has worked wholeheartedly to promote our Organization across the world and has brilliantly championed the strengthening of the United Nations and the enhancement of its prestige.

This is an excellent opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, whom I had the pleasure to receive in Bujumbura last July. We are extremely grateful to him for his profound commitment to peace, security and development throughout the world. The resounding appeal for peace and national reconciliation he made to the people of Burundi in particular and to Africa in general still rings in our ears.

Two years have passed since, from this very rostrum, His Excellency President Melchior Ndadaye, who was swept to power in Burundi following democratic elections, addressed a message of peace, friendship, brotherhood and solidarity to the General Assembly. Since the contemptible assassination of President Ndadaye on 21 October 1993, my country has laboured under a political, institutional, social and economic crisis that persists to this day. Nevertheless, despite the devastation and the political and ethnic massacres, the people of Burundi did not yield to despair. In a surge of optimism, the registered political parties and the representatives of civilian society held negotiations and in-depth discussions on how to bring the country out of the abyss into which the enemies of the fatherland had plunged it. After long and arduous debates, the Convention of Government was signed on 10 September 1994; this was followed by the restoration of the presidency and the establishment of a National Coalition Government.

We greatly appreciated the decisive contribution made by the United Nations to the people of Burundi's return to peace and security. When the crisis broke out, the Secretary-General sent a Special Envoy to the scene. Following that, he appointed His Excellency Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah as Special Representative to Burundi, and we extend our profound thanks to him for his patient and tireless efforts to bring the various

political partners together, despite their often deep differences of opinion at the height of the crisis. The United Nations sent to Burundi two successive delegations made up of distinguished ambassadors to the Security Council and headed by a distinguished African statesman, His Excellency Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria, to offer us advice and to bring us a message of peace and comfort. Other delegations of the United Nations and various international bodies in the United Nations system came to Burundi to demonstrate their support and solidarity. In the context of the promotion of human rights and education for peace and tolerance, a United Nations Centre for Human Rights and a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Peace House were established in Burundi.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also deserves our profound thanks because it has, from the very beginning of the crisis, sought appropriate solutions to enable Burundi to regain peace and stability. The work done by the pan-African organization is primarily to the credit of its Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, who displayed considerable diplomatic and human skills on behalf of Burundi. His work was later carried on by his Special Representative, His Excellency Ambassador Léandre Bassolé of Burkina Faso.

We should like to extend our thanks to all of the friendly countries which have assisted us in various ways and continue to do so, particularly in the brother countries which gave shelter to Burundi refugees. We are working to enable our compatriots to return home safely and we are coming to grips with the problem of displaced persons.

The Convention of Government, which was mentioned earlier and the first anniversary of which we have just celebrated, gave us an opportunity to set up State institutions and organs as well as various kinds of political and legal machinery that could restore confidence and cooperation among the political partners.

The first mission assigned us under this Convention is to restore peace and security in the country. Then it will be a question of restoring the rights of refugees and displaced persons, that is, to facilitate their return home with the assurance that in an initial phase they will be assured of the basic necessities until they can provide for their own needs.

The Government also intends to initiate the economic recovery and national reconstruction programme. However, if our subregion continues to produce refugees and to serve as a suitable place for illicit trafficking in deadly weapons of war, this situation would constitute an ongoing source of insecurity and destabilization for the countries concerned. Last February in Bujumbura, when we hosted the Regional Conference on Refugees, Repatriates and Displaced Persons for the Great Lakes region, organized under the auspices of the OAU in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a number of conclusions were drawn and resolutions adopted. Today we recognize that the road to be travelled remains a long one because the resolutions that were adopted remain a dead letter.

Indeed, it is important for the international community to become better mobilized to help us eradicate the basic causes of the continued instability and fragility of our lakes region. In our opinion it would be necessary, first of all, for everyone to have the same understanding of our history and, above all, to accept it as it is. They should also give serious consideration to lasting, definitive solutions that must be found for this conflict situation.

For our part, we consider that the major problem in Burundi lies in the conceptions of, access to and management of power among the various political actors in the national community.

We can affirm that the conflict that Burundi has experienced is far from being ethnic, as many political and media circles have alleged. The basis of the problem is essentially political, which is why solutions to this problem are condemned to be political also. We must reject and denounce the advocates of the policy of exclusion, segregation and extermination, which give rise to crises, instability and repeated conflicts. We condemn the ideology of hatred, of violence and of genocide exploited by so many politicians who wish to attain power or wish to remain in power at any cost.

The crisis which we are experiencing dates from the beginning of our independence and has deep roots in the organization and direction of the country during the colonial period. The various regimes which have succeeded one another in Burundi were powerless to resolve this situation. The problem must be addressed by the people of Burundi, assisted by the international community and not replaced by it.

We rely on the regional Conference on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region, which will be organized under the auspices of the United Nations, and which will seek to find appropriate, lasting

and definitive solutions. We should like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for having designated an African diplomat to take charge of the preparations for this Conference, to which my country attaches real importance.

Moreover, my delegation appeals to neighbouring countries to help us neutralize the efforts of those who, working from their own territory, have endeavoured to destabilize ours. It would indeed be illusory to want to extinguish a fire from within when, outside, militias, armed bands or malevolent groups are organizing and training themselves in order to attack Burundi.

Today, the country must face attacks waged jointly by the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU), the National Liberation Front (FROLINA), the National Council — improperly labelled the Democratic Defence Council (CNDD) — and its armed branch, the curiously named Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD). These groups, in collusion with military-political forces, are responsible for the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda.

In addition to these attacks there is another destabilizing force, the pirate radio station cynically baptized "Voice of the People", or, "Democracy Radio", which inculcates ethnic hatred within the Burundi population and which is working towards the dissemination of a neo-nazi-type ideology in this region of Central Africa at the end of this twentieth century. We are relying on the valuable assistance of our neighbouring and brotherly country, with which we share geography and history and with which we maintain the closest relations, to dismantle this medium of hatred, which is reminiscent in many ways of the infamous Free Radio-Television of the Thousand Hills (*la Radio-Télévision Libre des milles collines)* (RTLM), which galvanized the massacres last year in Rwanda.

We should like to reaffirm the unswerving attachment of the Government of Burundi to the principles of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of another State. We respect the bilateral, regional and international agreements and conventions to which Burundi has freely subscribed. In following these commitments the Government of Burundi hopes that our immediate neighbours and our partners will properly understand our problems and the problems that affect our region. They should understand the complexity and delicacy of the latter so that in trying to help us find solutions they will avoid pouring oil on the fire.

We know that, alone, we cannot arrive at harmonious, satisfactory and lasting solutions, and that is why we welcome with open arms the various forms of mediation aimed at helping us get out of the present crisis and at producing stability within our subregion. However, we would not want such mediation to lead to other, unexpected problems linked to undue interference in our internal affairs.

We have begun a campaign for the restoration of peace, with the support of the Government, the National Assembly and the political parties that are signatories to the Convention of Government. We are resolved to dismantle the armed gangs, be they within or outside our country. But our efforts to restore peace will be futile if we do not work towards eradicating the phenomenon of impunity, which has been aggravated by our country's current crisis. In this context, a request was sent to the United Nations to establish an international judicial commission of inquiry into the crimes committed in Burundi. We express our gratitude to the Security Council for the establishment of this commission.

Along these lines, we are planning to organize, in the near future, a national debate on the fundamental problems affecting the country, with a view to the adoption of a national covenant for peaceful coexistence between the various constituent parts of the nation and also of a new Constitution reflecting the realities now facing the country.

Lately, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, has been consulting various socio-political groups — professionals, the military, representatives of religious communities, women and disaffected youth — to solicit their suggestions for ensuring the speedy restoration of peace in Burundi. The conclusion is inescapable: everyone aspires to peace, justice and development. That is why our partners should not be discouraged, nor should they despair, when it comes to Burundi. The programme of national reconciliation and reconstruction will require a mobilization of appreciable funds, which Burundi alone cannot marshal. The reinstallation and reintegration of our displaced persons, expatriates and those who have been dispersed, the reconstruction of the socio-economic infrastructures that were destroyed, the training of our young people and the relaunching of the overall productive apparatus — these are my Government's major concerns.

We call upon the international community to support us unwaveringly in order that we may implement this vast programme. We hope that our partners will respond in a positive way at the General Round Table of donor countries, scheduled to be held in Geneva shortly, so that the necessary financial resources for the reconstruction of Burundi can be mobilized.

With respect to the Great Lakes subregion, Burundi encourages the Government of Rwanda to continue its policy of national reconciliation and to create the conditions of peace and security conducive to the return of Rwandan refugees to their homeland. For its part, the international community must ensure that those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda are punished in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We strongly urge the countries of the subregion to cooperate fully with the International Tribunal created for this purpose.

As regards the crisis in Somalia, my country hopes that the protagonists will agree to form a government based on a broad consensus. We invite our Somali brothers to lay down their arms and to work towards national reconciliation — the only road to lasting peace — and to devote themselves to rebuilding their country.

As for Angola, we welcome the constructive dialogue that has been established between President José Eduardo dos Santos and the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi. This is a positive development, which we hope will lead to a complete cessation of the hostilities that have taken so many lives among the brotherly people of Angola. We also nourish the hope that the Lusaka Peace Agreement will be implemented strictly by the parties so that peace can be restored to Angola. We urge the United Nations to speed up the planned deployment of forces in the context of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III).

We also welcome the developments in Liberia, in the Middle East and in the former Yugoslavia. We hope that the recent events in the former Yugoslavia will not inflame the situation further or stand in the way of a solution, which has been awaited for so long by the international community.

A look at the political configuration of the United Nations reveals a strange paradox: at a time when hotbeds of tension are concentrated in Africa, at a time when poverty there has broken every record and at a time when natural and man-made disasters are proliferating, many international forums are seeking to reduce our continent to the status of a poor relative. At a time when the golden jubilee of our Organization is being commemorated, Africa is the only one of the five continents to be excluded from permanent representation on the Security Council. But the dangers that loom over Africa, both from within and from outside, require that it be at the centre of deliberations and decisions on peace and security. Aside from this reality, the democratization of the United Nations is tantamount to a categorical imperative. Thus we strongly urge the establishment of a genuine parallel between the emergence of democracy on the scale of the Member States and the reform of the United Nations, so that Africa could be given access to permanent seats on the Security Council. Under the principle of democracy, the projected reforms of the United Nations system should reserve for our continent the lion's share, for two reasons: first, Africa, as a vast collective entity, has the right to permanent seats on the Security Council; and, secondly, Africa has the right to participate in the Council in a manner commensurate with its numerical significance. Once this twofold requirement has been recognized, Africa will be prepared to select those countries that are best suited politically, diplomatically, economically and demographically to sit permanently on the Security Council, on behalf of the entire continent.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, Burundi is keenly aware that the United Nations remains the source of salvation for the human race. My country reiterates and reaffirms its unswerving dedication to the ideals and objectives of the United Nations. As a concrete manifestation of that dedication, the Government of Burundi — even though it has borne the brunt of the effects of the international economic situation and of its own, two-year-long, severe national crisis — has just disbursed more than $76,000 by way of contribution to the regular budget of the United Nations. Nevertheless, Burundi must stress the imperative need for the world Organization to become an ever-present shield for peace, security and progress. To achieve this, it must evolve with the times and become a genuine universal forum in which all countries, regardless of their political, economic, geographical and economic disparities, can join together and unite in order to take decisions on the future of humankind.

This metamorphosis, to which the countries of the United Nations so strongly aspire, requires of Member States and other accredited agencies working to that end not only the political will but also and above all the creative genius to revitalize and breathe new life into the

Organization, allowing it to meet the challenges as this century enters its twilight years and to adapt to the vital issues of a planet moving inexorably into the third millennium.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two representatives have asked to speak in exercise of their right of reply, and I shall call on them.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

At a previous meeting of the General Assembly, the representative of Afghanistan, having spoken once in exercise of his right of reply, indicated that he reserved his right to make his second statement in reply at a later date. His second statement is therefore limited to five minutes.

Mr. Ghalib (Afghanistan): The delegation of Pakistan, on Thursday for the second time, speaking in exercise of its right of reply reiterated abusive language and views regarding the Islamic State of Afghanistan. My delegation felt that it was necessary to reply to the Pakistani statement. However, after evaluating the contents of that statement, we found no new elements, no elements other than the ones already responded to. The contents of the statement were irrelevant, unwarranted and indicative of an obviously antagonistic and interventionist policy.

In its statement in exercise of the right of reply, the Pakistani representative did not provide answers about the role of Pakistani Military Intelligence (ISI) in the occupation of Herat. In fact, a Pakistani agent by the name of Colonel Amir Imam is now acting as the Governor of the Afghan city, behind the scene.

It is a matter of disappointment that we are unable to get through to the delegation of Islamabad — and I will not refer to it as the "regime" of Islamabad — that "We, the peoples of the United Nations", have pledged to respect the right of each sovereign and independent nation to determine and conduct its own internal matters.

We are fully committed to this very important principle and we expect the Pakistani delegation to understand that the violation of this principle is nothing but interference in the internal affairs of others. That is precisely why we do not refer to the ongoing tragic situation in Malakand, Karachi and some other parts of Pakistan.

As is well known to the members of the Assembly, the Pakistani delegation referred several times to the ethnic composition of Afghanistan. This could be construed as an open incitement to ethnic hatred among the peoples of Afghanistan. In accordance with the legislation of many countries of the world, the stirring of ethnic hatred among people is considered a heinous and punishable crime. Efforts are even under way at the international level to consider this action an international crime.

That is why I do not speak about the ethnic conflicts in Pakistan. For instance, we do not discuss who is a minority or a majority in Karachi, or who is launching huge rockets against government buildings there, and we do not discuss how much the civilian Government of Pakistan is administering Karachi.

Last but not least, I quote a word of wisdom known to nations since antiquity: "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones" at the abodes of others.

Mr. Gaussot (France) (*interpretation from French*): Two delegations have referred to France, though not by name, in connection with the recent nuclear tests it has had to conduct. One delegation in particular called on my country to carry out its tests "on its own soil". In this connection, my delegation wishes to recall certain facts.

First, French Polynesia is an integral part of France. Thus, France is conducting these underground nuclear tests at home. Moreover, the President of the French Republic has publicly recalled the historical reasons for these tests being conducted in French territories of the Pacific rather than on metropolitan territory. Secondly, when a nuclear-test facility was being created, France naturally chose to establish it in a sparsely populated area. In any case, the harmlessness of our underground tests has been amply demonstrated and was again confirmed recently by distinguished French and foreign scientists.

Finally, my delegation would recall that this most recent series of tests, which does not contravene our commitments, since utmost restraint is not the same thing as prohibition, allowed France to come out unreservedly — and we were the first nuclear Power to do so — in favour of the strictest and most satisfactory option concerning the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty now being negotiated; that is, in favour of a treaty prohibiting in 1996 all nuclear tests and explosions of any magnitude whatever.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.